

Message Text

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FOR SECRETARY FROM BROWN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, SY

SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION

1. CAN LEBANESE GOVERNMENT ASSEMBLE ENOUGH FORCE TO ASSERT ITS AUTHORITY? YOU'VE ASKED THIS QUESTION. SO DO I. TO MYSELF AND, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, TO EVERYONE I TALK TO.

2. THE ANSWER IN THE SHORT TERM IS NO. THE ARMY HAS DISAPPEARED, THE NAVY IS IN JOUNIEH, AND THE AIR FORCE IS GROUNDED UNDER PLA GUARD. IN DISAPPEARING ARMY HAS SPLIT IN FOUR: ONE PART IS KHATIB AND HIS RATHER UNORGANIZED MOB OF MOSLEMS, ANOTHER HAS JOINED MARONITES, A SPLINTER GROUP IS UNDER COUP LEADER AHDAB AND FORMER ARMY HIGH COMMAND, AND A GOOD PART HAS SIMPLY VANISHED. POLICE FORCE THE SAME WITH EMPHASIS ON DISAPPEARANCE.

3. CAN IT BE RECONSTITUTED? THERE IS NO WAY, FOR INSTANCE, TO ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE ARMY AND POLICE FORCE WITHIN THREE MONTHS. THIS, I REMEMBER, IS ONE OF TIME SPANS SUGGESTED FOR A SYRIAN INTERVENTION. THE MORE PESSIMISTIC OF THE LEBANESE TELL ME THE SYRIANS WILL HAVE TO BE HERE FOR TWO YEARS, PERHAPS IN DECREASING NUMBERS, BEFORE FULL SECURITY CAN BE ANSWERED BY LEBANESE FORCES. IT COULD BE LESS BUT THERE ARE PROBLEMS.

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4. PRIMARY IS THAT OF OFFICER/SENIOR NCO RANKS. THOSE

WHO HAVE PLAYED PROMINENT ROLE ON ONE SIDE OR ANOTHER WILL BE REJECTED BY MASS OF PEOPLE. AND MANY OF THOSE WHO STOOD ASIDE OR VANISHED WILL BE OBJECTS OF RIDICULE. NEVERTHELESS, AMONG LATTER ARE SEEDS FOR A FUTURE FORCE. DRAFTING OF NEW SOLDIERS CAN BE DONE BUT DECENT OFFICER/NCO FORCE IS ESSENTIAL.

5. HOW CAN IT BE DONE? ONE WAY WOULD BE THROUGH A SORT OF MIXED COMMISSION: LEBANESE, PALESTINIAN, SYRIAN. WE'RE SEEING TODAY ATTEMPTS TO SET THIS UP (UNDER NOMINAL COMMAND OF COUP LEADER AHDAB) WITH, HOWEVER, THE VERY LIMITED AIM OF TRYING TO PROVIDE SECURITY FOR PARLIAMENT TO MEET IN NEXT FEW DAYS UNDER CONDITIONS WHEREIN MARONITES ARE ABLE TO SAY THEY WERE ABLE TO ATTEND PARLIAMENT BECAUSE SOME LEBANESE FORCES WERE INVOLVED IN GUARANTEEING SECURITY OF THE MEETING. SAD TRUTH IS THAT LEBANESE ARMY, AS OF PRESENT, CAN'T SEEM TO ROUND UP MORE THAN AHDAB'S 200 MEN FOR THAT JOB. NEVERTHELESS, JUST DOING THIS GIVES US AN OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK AT SITUATION, SEE IF IT WORKS, AND SEE IF IT HAS SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE. WHILE I'M SKEPTICAL, IT'S WORTH THE LOOK AS ALTERNATIVES POSE REAL PROBLEMS FOR US.

6. SO WE COME TO MORE BASIC REALITIES. LEBANESE ARE TOO FRAGMENTED TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SECURITY NEEDED. TO BUILD UP WHAT THEY HAD BEFORE: ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE, GENDARMERIE AND LOCAL POLICE (ALL FILLING ESSENTIALLY THE SAME ROLE AND NONE OF THEM CAPABLE OF FIGHTING AN EXTERNAL ENEMY) WOULD BE FOOLISH AS IT WOULD BE TOO WASTEFUL IN USE OF WHAT WILL BE QUITE LIMITED MANPOWER.

7. SO THERE ARE TWO ALTERNATIVES, EACH OF WHICH PRESENTS REAL PROBLEMS: FIRST, SECURITY THROUGH PHALANGE/PALESTINIANS (INCLUDING SYRIAN-DIRECTED) AND LEFTIST FORCES. THIS SEEMS MAD BUT COULD BE JUST POSSIBLE IF ARAFAT AND ASSAD GENERALLY AGREE TO CONTROL LEFTISTS IN PROCESS. PALESTINIAN/PHALANGE COOPERATION MIGHT ALSO SEEM MAD TO AN OUTSIDE OBSERVER BUT THESE GROUPS ARE ALREADY IN CONTACT. IT MIGHT WORK.

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8. OTHER ALTERNATIVE IS SYRIAN INTERVENTION. IT WOULD PROBABLY REQUIRE 3-4 BRIGADES PLUS SUPPORT TROOPS; SMALLER FORCES MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO COPE WITH MYRIAD FRONTS THAT EXIST. BEIRUT TRULY REQUIRES REAL SHOW OF STRENGTH AND A LOT OF BRUTALITY IN PUTTING DOWN THE UNCONTROLLED GROUPS WHO LOOT AND KILL FOR PLEASURE.

9. WHAT WE SHOULD START NOW IS THINKING OF THE FUTURE. I'M SKEPTICAL OF INTERNATIONAL POLICE FORCE. BUT THE MAJOR TASK IN LONG RUN WILL BE RECONSTRUCTION, CENTERED ON REBUILDING OF COUNTRY'S INFRASTRUCTURE. INCLUDED THEREIN IS SECURITY. WHILE THERE IS NO CONSENSUS AT ALL HERE ON WHAT INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WOULD DO TO STOP FIGHTING OR TO RESTORE PEACE, THERE IS ONE THAT FOREIGN HELP WILL BE NEEDED IN REBUILDING COUNTRY. BOTH EDDE AND SARKIS (TOP CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDENTIAL JOB) THINK THIS WAY AND SEE INTERNATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION AS INCLUDING LARGE NUMBERS OF EXPERTS, MANY INVOLVED IN SECURITY PROBLEM, INCLUDING POLICING AND TRAINING.

10. THIS IS NOT A WAY OUT OF TODAY'S MESS. IT'S ONE WAY, I THINK, OF MOVING INTO FUTURE. PERHAPS SOME SORT OF INTERNATIONAL CONCORDIUM CAN GIVE SIGN TO LEBANESE FACTIONS THAT SECURITY CAN BE AVAILABLE WITHIN CONTEXT OF AN INTERNATIONALLY-AIDED RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT. IN ANY CASE, I HOPE THE DEPARTMENT IS STUDYING THIS POSSIBILITY. THERE IS ANGLE OF SYRIAN SENSITIVITY TO EXPLORE CAREFULLY.

11. IN SUMMARY, MR. SECRETARY, I DON'T THINK THE LEBANESE ALONE CAN SOLVE THEIR SECURITY PROBLEM. THEY COULDN'T IN THE PAST AND THEY CERTAINLY CAN'T TODAY. WE HAVE TO CONSIDER THESE ALTERNATIVES CAREFULLY: (1) LET SYRIANS STEP UP WHAT THEY HAVE ALREADY DONE AND I UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM WE FACE WITH THIS, OR (2) GET PALESTINIANS INTO ACT EVEN MORE THAN THEY ARE TODAY. AND LATTER, I THINK, WILL REQUIRE ACTION FROM US. ON THIS I'LL CABLE YOU TOMORROW.
BROWN

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